

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

PRESENT

- The Mayor – Councillor Jones
- The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Rushton
- Councillor Baddeley
- Councillor Barlow
- Councillor Brady
- Councillor Davies
- Councillor McLoughlin
- Councillor Perkin
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Sheldon
- Councillor Smith
- Councillor Yates

Also, in attendance

- Councillor Hart
- Councillor Harper
- Councillor Hawley
- Councillor Jackson
- Councillor Salt
- Councillor Swift

1.20 ELECTION OF A CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR

Councillor Jones called for nominations for the role of Chair of the Town and Community Committee. Councillor Rogers nominated Councillor McLoughlin; seconded by Councillor Davies.

Councillor Yates nominated Councillor Smith to improve the 'gender balance'; seconded by Councillor Brady.

There was a vote. Councillor McLoughlin received seven votes; Councillor Smith received four votes. Councillor McLoughlin was elected Chair.

Councillor McLoughlin called for nominations for the role of Deputy Chair of the Town and Community Committee. Councillor Rogers nominated Councillor Davies; seconded by Councillor Sheldon.

Councillor Jones nominated Councillor Hart; seconded by Councillor Baddeley.

Councillor Yates nominated Councillor Smith; seconded by Councillor Brady.

Councillor Jones withdrew his nomination; Councillor Hart is not a member of this Committee.

There was a vote. Councillor Davies received seven votes; Councillor Smith received four votes. Councillor Davies was elected as Deputy Chair.

2. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon in anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom. Councillor Jones is a member of the Royal British Legion (RBL). Councillor Salt's mother is a member of the RBL.
- b) Other Interests: Councillor Hart is the Deputy Chair of the Moorlands Partnership Board. Councillor Sheldon is the Chair of the Moorlands Partnership Board. Councillor Harper is a member of the War Memorials Trust.

4. MINUTES

- a) The Minutes of the Town and Community Committee meeting held on Tuesday 18 February 2020 were approved; these would be signed at a later date.

There are a number of Working Groups that ceased to meet at the end of 2019/start of 2020. These minutes should be approved by the Town and Community Committee and signed at a later date. These are attached in one pack:

- b) Notes of the **Garden Event Working Group** meeting held on Monday 3 February 2020 and Monday 24 February 2020.

- c) Notes of the **VE/VJ and Cenotaph Working Group** meeting held on 31 July 2019, 5 September 2019, 3 October 2019, 3 February 2020, 24 February 2020.
- d) Notes of the **Christmas Lights Working Group** on 10 October 2019, 5 November 2019, 13 November 2019 and 10 December 2019.
- e) Notes of the **Environment and Climate Change Working Group** meeting held on Monday 24 February 2020.
- f) Notes of the **Young People's Working Group** meeting held on 2 December 2019.

The Chief Officer noted that a number of these groups had been unable to conclude their business prior to the Covid pandemic, but that minutes should be agreed in order to ensure that decisions were recorded appropriately.

Councillor McLoughlin queried whether members had read the minutes and whether there were any questions. It was proposed that these be accepted 'on block'; seconded by Councillor Sheldon and approved.

Councillor Rogers thanked all those who had been involved in the Moorlands Radio 'event' to mark VE Day.

5. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON STATION ROAD (STANDING AGENDA ITEM)

a) Electricity Company - Ombudsman complaint

The Chief Officer reminded members that Phase 1 of the project had stalled as there had been an issue getting an electricity meter installed on-site. This had resulted in the Chief Officer making a complaint to the Electricity Ombudsman. The Town Council had received a cheque for £120 and an apology. The meter would now be installed, which would mean that the fountains could be commissioned.

b) Land purchase and future development

The Chief Officer noted that the conveyancing work to purchase a small area of land from Sainsbury's was nearly complete.

Councillor Sheldon and the Biddulph in Bloom volunteers needed support to re-cut the edges on the site. The Chief Officer would speak to the Lengthsman. Councillor Sheldon would like to re-shape the narrow borders.

Councillor Smith reminded members that there had been a number of requests to place a time capsule in the Phase 2 development, and an opportunity to remember the current Covid situation.

Councillor Rogers queried whether a coating was needed on the paving; the Chief Officer would make enquiries as to whether this would be necessary.

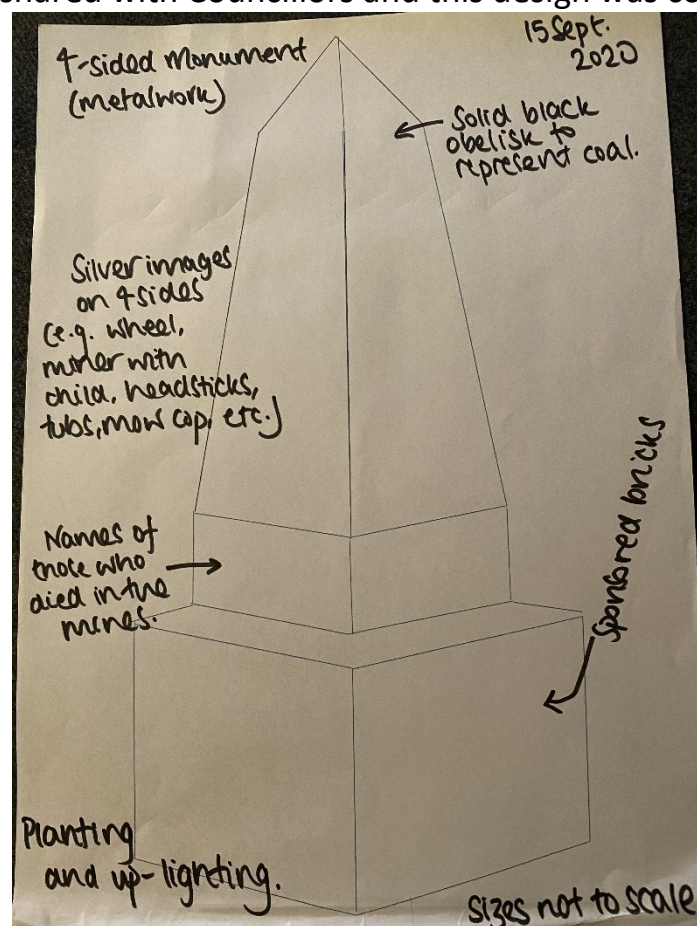
Councillor Sheldon felt that grit was abrasive.

c) To consider the proposal for the mining memorial.

A reminder that the last meeting identified the following requirements:

- *Install a 3D representation.*
- *A cut-out design idea could work well.*
- *Represent coal.*
- *Install a brick plinth as a stand for the memorial with 'sponsored bricks'.*
- *The names of those who had died in the mines should be placed in the vicinity.*

The screen was shared with Councillors and this design was considered:



The Chief Officer and the Events and Partnerships Officer had met with the company that had previously provided advice; this seemed to be a solution that would meet all the requirements set out previously.

Councillor Harper liked the design; there may be a considerable cost to adding the names of those that had died, if there was a cost per letter.

Councillor McLoughlin noted that there may be around 200 names.

Councillor Jackson was concerned about including names; for everyone person who had died underground there would be fifty others that had died of other illnesses. There was potential to miss names. The cost is also an issue. Sponsored bricks may be a way to reduce the cost of the memorial. Councillor Jackson proposed that a small group be convened to pull these ideas together. Councillor Jackson did not like the idea of adding a tub, although this could be added to the Biddulph Valley Way.

Councillor Jones wondered whether the balancing wheel that is positioned in front of the Town Hall could be moved. This could be re-positioned on a plinth at Station Road. The wheel is not prominent where it currently is.

Councillor Salt did not like the idea of adding names to a memorial. Councillor Salt wondered if the community were proud of the wheel; the Town Council are custodians of memories. There is probably a reason why the wheel is in its current position.

It was agreed that Councillors Jones, Jackson and Harper would meet to discuss options.

Councillor Sheldon did not approve of moving the balancing wheel. George Humphries had been loved and respected and had fought to position the wheel outside the Town Hall. Councillor Sheldon liked the design that the Chief Officer had presented. A proper maintenance plan must be considered.

Councillor Hart was not opposed to moving the wheel, but liked the obelisk design.

Councillor Smith also felt the balancing wheel had been placed in front of the Town Hall to memorialise those who had been involved in the mining industry. Councillor Smith also liked the design.

Councillor Davies noted that the Neighbourhood Plan had included ideas about the development of the town centre outside the Town Hall.

Councillor Jones did not believe that George Humphries would have been concerned about moving the balancing wheel.

Councillor Smith proposed that Councillors Harper, Jones and Jackson should consider this further and report back to this Committee; seconded by Councillor Yates and agreed.

6. TO CONSIDER ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS 2020

The Chief Officer noted that Officers were considering additional Covid restrictions and what neighbouring areas are doing. The Christmas Lights event would normally attract around 3000 people and safety had to be the main consideration. It was important to begin decision-making to ensure partners could make their plans.

Councillor Jones felt the Town Council should hope for the best and plan for the worst.

Councillor Rogers wondered whether a virtual switch-on event would be possible.

Councillor Salt felt it was unlikely that the event could go ahead; a virtual event was a good idea.

Councillor Hawley confirmed that the Christmas tree and lights would still be put up, in the town centre and at Biddulph Moor. If the lights are turned on at the usual time, there is a risk that people will turn up.

Councillor Rogers felt the switch-on should be pre-recorded.

Councillor Davies noted that it was not a good experience cancelling an event and urged the Committee not to advertise anything until a decision had been reached.

Councillor Rushton wished to see lights up around every home.

Councillor Smith wondered whether local schools could be involved.

Councillor McLoughlin wondered whether the normal Switch-on Working Group should convene to consider this further; proposed by Councillor Yates, seconded by Councillor Smith. It was agreed that this meeting would take place at 5pm on Tuesday 22 September; the Town Crier would also be invited. It was agreed that the following Councillors would attend: Jones, Rushton, Rogers and Davies. The Chief Officer would send the invitation to all Councillors.

7. TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF OFFICER ABOUT PROGRESS WITH THE ACTION PLAN SINCE THE LAST MEETING (EXTRACT BELOW).

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR COUNCILLORS TO SEEK ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/ CLARIFICATION.

The Chief Officer provided brief updates in relation to the items below. Further actions are recorded:

1	Provide Support and Information to Town Centre traders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Keep under review a database of traders to enable the Town Council to communicate grant, event, etc. information effectively. b) Consider development of a BID. c) Pursue opportunities for town centre development following Covid-19 pandemic.
2	Complete development of Station Road gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Complete purchase of Sainsbury's land and move to Phase 2 of development. b) Work with SMDC to take on lease for land, rather than license. c) Install monument/ sculpture. d) Ensure appropriate management arrangements are in place for fountain.
3	Role of Artisan Market and town centre trading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Promote Artisan Market and Fresh Food Friday and consider appropriate changes in 2021-2. b) Consider the introduction of new initiatives, e.g. youth market, Ethical Fair. c) Undertake analysis of footfall on the High Street.

Councillor Rogers queried whether the Town Council was continuing with the market under the current rules and regulations. The Chief Officer noted that there were no new recommendations that would prevent this. The risk assessments were being updated. Movement around the stalls and town was important. The September market had a nice feel and it was good to welcome old

and new faces to the town. The plan was to have markets in October, November and December. It remained the aim to encourage people onto the High Street to support traders.

The Chief Officer confirmed that £2000 had been requested from SMDC. Councillor Salt had requested an update on this.

4	Increased involvement in Community Events	Continue to work on events such as the Biddulph Festival, Christmas Lights, Volunteer events, heritage celebrations, etc. Identifying new opportunities to promote tourism and increase footfall.
5	Enhancement of partnerships within the town	Continue to work on Biddulph Network, Dementia action plan, Tree Charter actions, collaborate with Friends Groups, health and mental health partners and support for the voluntary sector.

Councillor Salt advised that the District Council had been asked to provide clarification about their tree planting scheme.

7	Expand tourism activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Explore opportunities at Biddulph Grange Visitor Centre. b) Print and distribute Biddulph map c) Improvements to website and tourism 'offer' within town Hall (inc. new cabinets) d) Improved signage in and around the town. e) Support for walking and Ramblers initiatives. f) Consider membership of Enjoy Staffordshire.
8	Provide services and support for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work with Community Council to develop a youth vision. b) Work with Biddulph Youth and Community Zone to establish the effectiveness of a detached youth worker scheme/ disco. c) Facilitate Youth People's Working Group. d) Work with School's Learners Forum e) Support 'Staged' youth theatre project. f) Consider enhancements of play opportunities and youth facilities.

Councillor Brady felt it was most important to resume meetings in relation to young people as soon as possible.

9	Complete restoration projects and protection of heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Deliver MPB projects and identify other options. b) Restoration of war memorial. c) Consideration of designated conservation areas/ locally listed buildings.
10	Lead town with Ceremonial occasions	Seek guidance from national agencies, as appropriate. Where possible, consider options for social distancing celebrations/ events.
<p>Councillor Salt advised that Sainsbury's would not permit the British Legion to sell poppies this year; the Chief Officer had confirmed that poppies could be sold from the Town Hall. It also seemed unlikely that there would be a parade this year. It may be that there would just be wreath layers and prayers.</p> <p>Councillor Jones made further enquiries about the sale of poppies. In addition, some sort of crowd control may be necessary on Remembrance Sunday. It was not felt appropriate to ask people not to come.</p> <p>Councillor Yates wondered whether Covid Marshals could support this event.</p> <p>Councillor Smith queried whether people could be encouraged to mark this event at home. A live streamed, online event.</p>		
11	Implement appropriate recommendations in relation to Environment and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Separate action plan with priorities to be developed by Environment and Climate Change Working Group. b) Consider public meeting in relation to a local response to environmental issues end 2020, early 2021. c) Enhance reputation of 'Garden Town of Staffordshire' d) Improvement to flood risk areas
<p>Councillor Yates advised that the District Council Working Group was actively seeking input from town and parish Councils and develop local solutions.</p> <p>Councillor Hawley wanted to make sure that the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group was invited to these groups.</p>		
12	Town Centre enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Refurbish bollards and noticeboards. b) Develop register of community assets (inc. other areas of town, as required) c) Identify opportunities to improve town centre public realm. d) Lobby for changes to car parking at Wharf Road to encourage footfall within the town centre. e) Consideration of a shop front grant scheme.

The Chief Officer noted that there were recommendations from the Town Centre Highways Group. Amey are putting together a quote to do this work; this could be considered at the Finance Strategy and Management Committee.

Councillor Yates felt that the County Council should be asked to contribute to this.

13	Town centre toilet provision (inc. bus hub) and usage of old toilet block	a) To ensure cleaning and management is completed satisfactorily. b) Consider use of bus hub. c) Assess need for storage in the old toilet block and seek quotations for renovation.
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The Chief Officer noted that the use of the bus hub should be considered at a later date. This building is not particularly useful; it is not currently open to the public. This space has potential.

Councillor Rogers felt a Tourism hub would be good.

Councillor Davies wanted to ensure that the enhancement of signage at either end of the town were still on the agenda for consideration.

The meeting closed at 8.32 pm.

Signed Date